Combat Support To Tactical Operations

The following discussion is of general employment considerations concerning tactical Military Police support in various combat maneuvers and environments. FM 19-4 provides detailed information on the interface of division, corps and theater Army MP support in the operations discussed.

Offense

Military Police support during conduct of offensive operations is best characterized as **centralized control with decentralized execution.** The priority of employment is circulation control designed to keep logistical flow moving with throughput and insure timely maneuver of any unit on the battlefield.

Throughput refers to a logistical process designed to minimize the number of times a shipment is loaded and unloaded on its way to the forward unit requiring supplies. Trucks loaded at the theater go directly to DISCOM without off-loading.

Some circulation control measures that become important employment considerations during offensive operations are:

Circulation control points in depth to provide for controlled traffic movement.

Timely and wide distribution of route and unit information to reduce the number of stragglers; thereby keeping combat troop strength at the highest possible level.

Insuring rapid passage through defiles.

Convoy security, personal security of commanders and PW control.

Defense

Defensive operations tend to reduce the flexibility of unite. Military Police support is characterized by **centralized control and centralized execution.** ***An absolute priority for MP support is insuring that reserve units are able to move to the critical point on the battlefield.*** Circulation control measures will be a priority of employment to include the following:

- ☐ Increase circulation control points to speed movement of reserves, ammunition and POL resupply.
- ☐ Facilitate passage of lines and lateral movement operation.
- ☐ Increase emphasis on convoy security, particularly resupply and special weapons.
- ☐ Increase straggler control measures to return friendly troops to effective combat status and prevent infiltration by the enemy.
- ☐ Increase refugee control measures to provide for either smooth passage through friendly lines, rerouting refugees off MSRs to alternate routes, or enforcing standfast orders.

Retrograde

Retrograde operations are characterized by **centralized control and decentralized execution.** MP support priority goes to combat service support units first, combat support units second, and combat units last. Circulation control considerations are as follows:

Facilitate movement to the rear and passage of lines, to include establishing temporary route signs.

Circulation control points along MSRs, particularly choke points such as defiles, bridges, tunnels and built up areas.

Shift or stop refugee movements on MSRs which may impede military movements.

Reconnaissance to determine alternate routes.

Report and/or engage enemy interdiction along established routes; defending critical points until relieved by combat units.

Pursuit

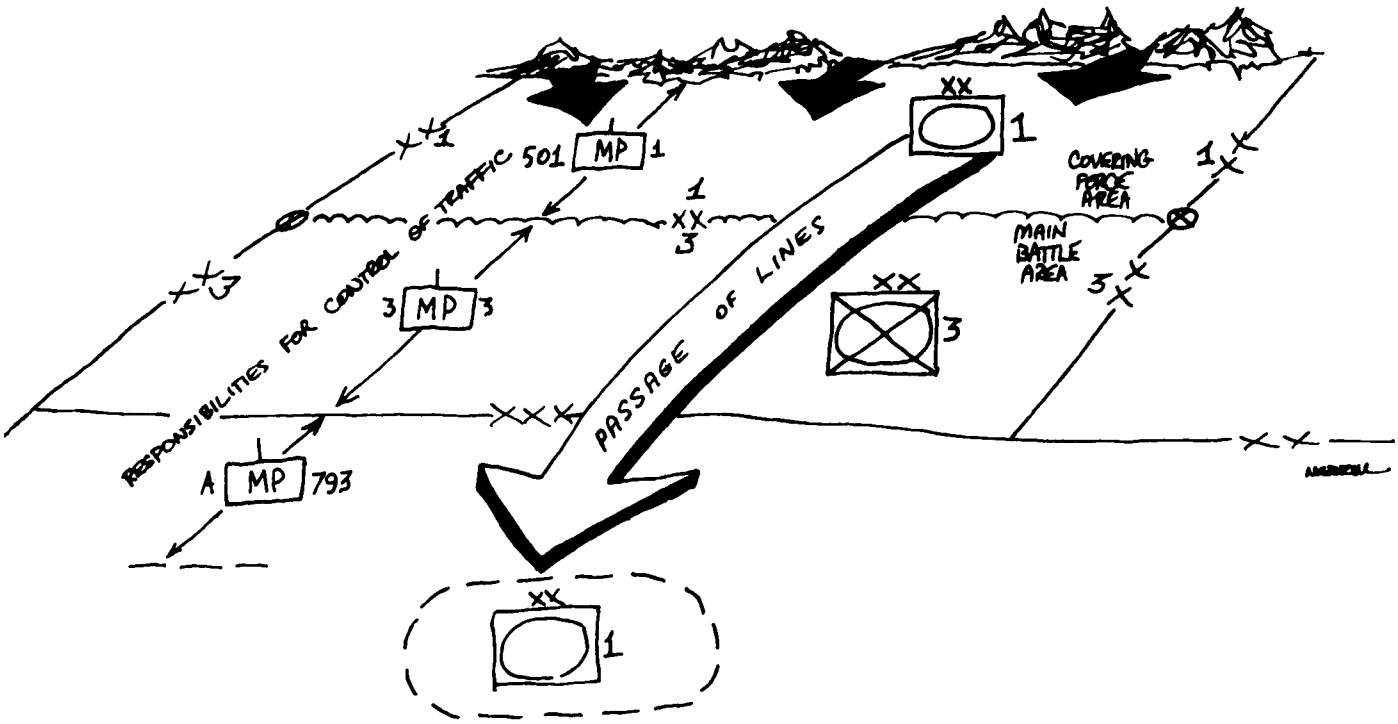
Pursuit operations are usually characterized by extremely rapid movement of armor and mechanized units. Convoy security, straggler and PW control becomes priority MP support missions. **Control and execution will be decentralized** to allow MP elements to stay abreast of the developing tactical situation.

Passage of Lines And Relief in Place

An operation in which one unit moves through another unit, whether this movement is an attack, retrograde, lateral or relief in place. It requires close coordination between units, especially Military Police units supporting the movement. The coordination of these movements are planned and coordinated at corps level. The circulation control plan is based on the commander's priorities, tactical movement and administrative requirements, and high way regulation/control plans.

The following circulation control plans and measures must be considered:

- ○ Routes to be used.
- ○ Location of assembly areas.



MP Responsibilities for Passage of Lines

○ Providing for guides to incoming units.

○ Insuring that the unit moving through or into the area has priority use of roadways.

○ Rigid straggler and refugee control to prevent possible infiltration of enemy units.

○ Common use of transportation resources.

Responsibility for circulation control for vehicle movement remains the responsibility of the unit in an area until it has been relieved. The illustration above demonstrates MP circulation control responsibilities as one division passes through another division to an assembly area.

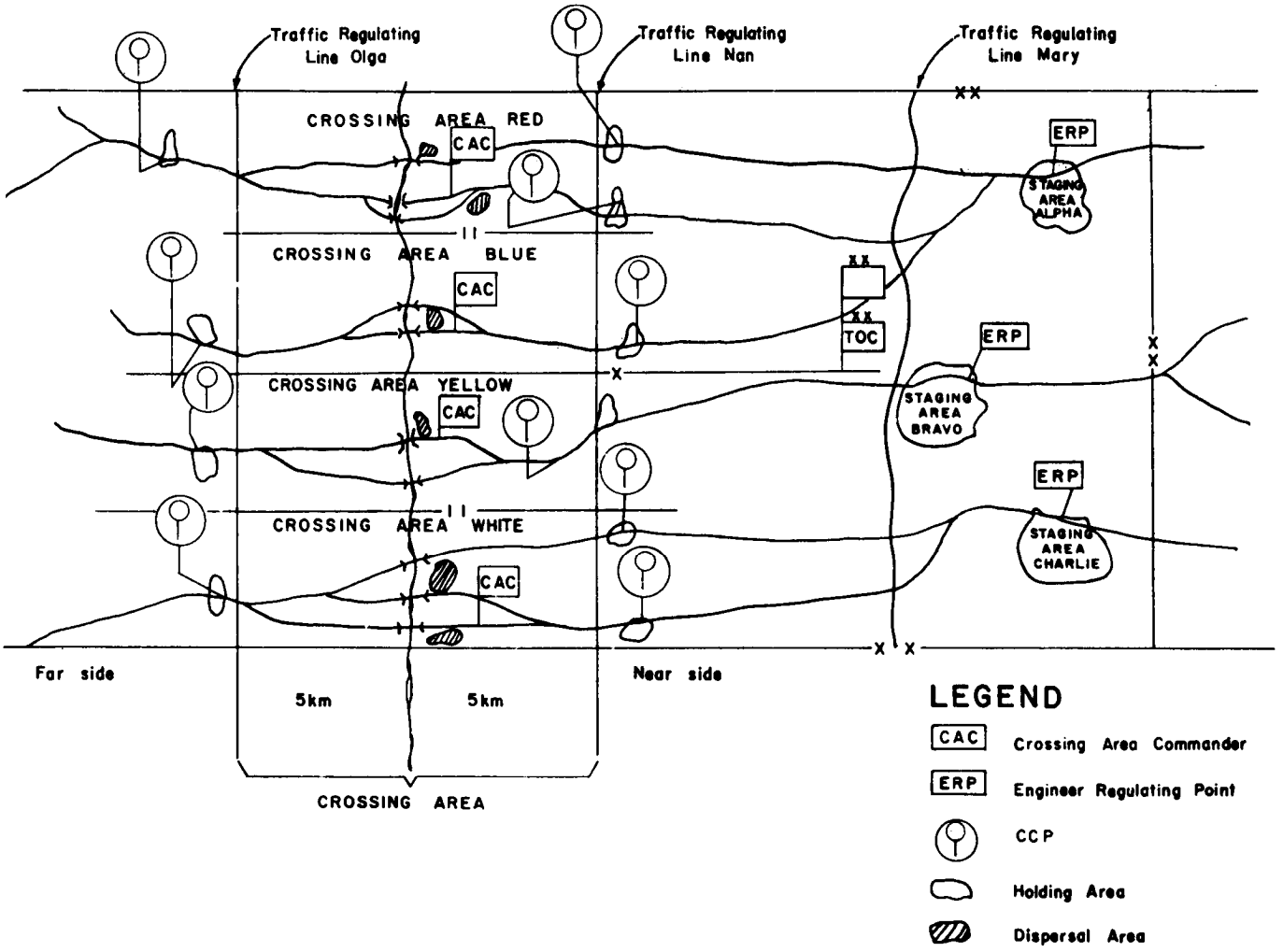
River Crossings

A military unit must cross river obstacles quickly and efficiently to continue on with the attack. Regardless of whether permanent or temporary bridges or fording is the means used to cross a river, firm and continuous control is essential. Military Police and engineers assist the unit commander in establishing this control. The MP's role is to:

► Insure only authorized movement takes place; priorities are honored; and congestion does not occur. Congestion within an area provides an inviting target for enemy fire.

► Insure all vehicles clear engineer regulating points (ERPs). The ERP prepares vehicles for the movement and insures class, width and height restrictions are not violated. ERPs maybe located at staging areas, holding areas and dispersal areas.

► Insure holding areas and routes are established within the designated crossing area and alternate



Traffic Facilities for a River Crossing

routes are available and controlled in case of emergencies.

- Help provide security.
- Maintain refugee/straggler control.

The Military Police portion of a river crossing operation is organized into three distinct areas—**near side, crossing areas and far side.**

Near Side

The Near Side is that area from the division rear boundary to a predetermined traffic regulating line. There may be several traffic regulating lines. They identify the commander's forward limit of responsibility for traffic control. Within the near side are the **staging area and the holding area.** Military Police in these areas have the mission of insuring all priorities and regulations are met prior to units moving up toward the crossing area.

Staging Area— The first location where ERPs are met by crossing units. Staging areas are usually located well back from the river itself. Here vehicles are prepared for the river crossing.

Holding Area— A location where Military Police hold traffic to avoid congestion and buildup at crossing site(s). It is usually located just behind (1 to 5 km) the beginning of the area designated as the crossing area.

Crossing Area

The crossing area is the one in which the river obstacle lies. It is bounded by the front traffic regulating line on the near side and a regulating line located on the far side. A crossing area commander is designated to have sole responsibility and authority in this area. Military Police offer general support to the area commander, and assist in the continuing mission of controlling traffic. A **dispersal area** is a designated area just to the rear of the actual crossing site, and it acts as a final holding area. This area is controlled by Military Police whose operations are controlled by the crossing area commander.

FM 19-4 provides information on the support divisional and corps MP units provide during river crossing operations. In an **opposed crossing,** the division MP company is responsible for the crossing site initially, while the dedicated corps MP company is responsible for support on the near side, excluding the crossing site. As the division breeches the far side, the division MP company displaces with it, to support circulation control on the far side; and the corps MP company assumes responsibility for all near side MP support.

In an **unopposed crossing,** the division MP company moves across initially as a part of the division to assume MP support on the far side with the corps MP company performing all near side support.

When **bridges** are involved, Military Police will be stationed at entrances and exits, as well as on the bridge, if necessary, to insure speeds, load and interval limits. as well as security of the bridge is maintained. There are specific requirements for different types of bridge crossings. It is the responsibility of the engineers to determine these requirements and of the MPs to assist in enforcing them.

Far Side

The far side is the area across the river. A major control problem here is congestion due to massing of vehicles. Circulation control points (CCPs) and holding areas are established by Military Police to alleviate congestion and to move vehicles out of the area as quickly as possible. In addition to traffic problems, plans must also be established for evacuation of PW and control of stragglers. FM 19-4 discusses the responsibilities and interface of divisional and corps MP companies supporting a river crossing operation.

Types of Bridge Crossings

Due to age, structure material and strength, bridges have varying capacities and classifications. Engineers are responsible for determining the capacity of a bridge. Military vehicles are classified by load weight, ranging from 4 through 150. Military Police enforce the capacity decisions made by the engineers. Bridge crossings are classified by two types **- normal and special (caution or risk).**

NORMAL BRIDGE CROSSINGS

Normal crossings are made when the vehicle class number is equal to or less than the bridge classification. The crossing may be one-way or two-way. During one-way operations on a two-way bridge, vehicles should drive down the center of the bridge. On-coming traffic must be halted, thereby causing a temporary obstruction to two-way flow of traffic. The minimum vehicle interval is 30.5 meters (100 ft) and the maximum speed is 40 kph (25 mph).

Special Bridge Crossings

Special crossings occur when the vehicle class number exceeds the bridge classification. They are classified as either caution or risk crossings. They are authorized only under exceptional conditions by the military area authority or civil authorities, if appropriate.

Caution Crossing

When the vehicle class does not exceed 25 percent of the bridge class, it's a caution crossing. Vehicles must stay in the center of the bridge, maintain a minimum of 50 meters interval and the maximum speed is 8 mph (13 kph). Stopping, accelerating or shifting gears is prohibited.

Risk Crossing

This is when the vehicle class exceeds 25 percent of

the bridge classification and is authorized only in grave emergencies. An engineer officer must inspect for damage after each crossing and have the damage repaired before traffic resumes. Vehicles must stay in the center and cross one at a time. Maximum speed is 3 miles per hour. Stop ping, accelerating, or shifting gears is prohibited. Tanks must steer by using clutch only.

Retrograde Crossings

Retrograde river crossing operations are characterized by detailed planning and centralized control. Several factors affect the Military Police circulation control mission and the overall operational plan.

Time may be at a premium with friendly forces under enemy pressure.

Maneuver advantage will belong to the enemy commander.

Command and control problems will be difficult, often caused by the need to determine the enemy's courses of action. This will become acute as the battle closes on the river obstacles.

The unit conducting this operation overall is organized into **delaying, crossing area and defending forces.** Military Police are part of the crossing area force. Some circulation control considerations for Military Police are:

- Combat service support units not required to sustain the delay force are moved to the rear at the earliest practical time.
- Use of holding areas is discouraged when troops are massed under enemy fire. The call up of units to cross the river is preplanned and should not exceed the capacity of the crossing area.
- Since crossing times may be preplanned, crossing area sites must be kept open. Unnecessary traffic or personnel must not impede military units. Standfast orders are enforced concerning refugee movements. As the battle closes on the river, absolute enforcement of movement priorities must be met.

Amphibious Operations

For Military Police to be effective in amphibious operations, they must be **one of the early units to land** on the beachhead. Tentative control procedures and locations must be preplanned. This must be done in coordination with the Navy shore party and beachmasters. Procedures to be used in **dewaterproofing** areas (removal of special equipment emplaced for the operation) must be outlined in advance since this area maybe a point of congestion and a vulnerable target.

MPs must disperse vehicles quickly and move them inland to avoid congestion which may occur as successive waves of units land. Since **road networks are usually not present,** specific guides must be established. Maximum use of temporary signs, engineer tape and tactical control points should be used to create artificial roadways. All **Military Police must be well briefed** with sufficient information about the area to perform effective circulation control. Straggler control points must be established to quickly reunite troops with their units. Prisoner of war collection areas are designated so as not to impede security or traffic flow.

Airborne Operations

Military Police support of airborne operations covers two distinct locations—the **staging area** and the **airhead.** At the **staging area,** security is of prime importance. Military Police performing circulation control must insure that unnecessary traffic in the staging area is restricted. Non-mission support vehicles and personnel must be rerouted around the staging area. This lessens congestion and denies possible enemy intelligence efforts.

At the **airhead,** PW and command post security are the priority missions of Military Police during initial phases of the operation. As vehicle support increases, traffic control becomes increasingly important. Airborne MP units are required to

control traffic within the airhead and the narrow corridors between the airhead and linkup units. Regular control signs and reflectorized equipment is not used in the airhead. Any necessary temporary signs should be prepared on cloth and issued to MPs prior to the operation.

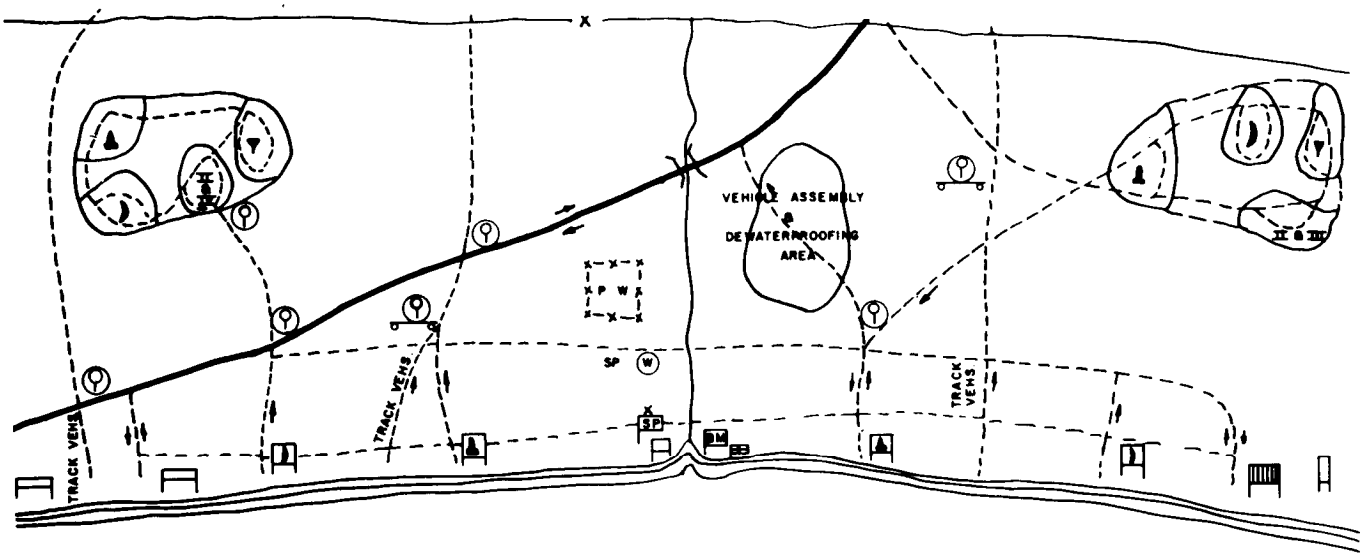
Desert Operations

A large number of Military Police are required to effectively control circulation in a desert environment because of the adverse physical conditions and lack of terrain features, established routes, cover and concealment. MPs must be highly trained in land navigation techniques, since a desert operation is highly mobile and changing. Security is a particular problem. Strict enforcement of camouflage and blackout requirements is necessary. Command posts and supply areas may have multiple entries requiring multiple dismount points and additional Military Police for security purposes.

Jungle Operations

Circulation control is of prime importance in jungle operations due to the physical environment which characterizes jungles. These characteristics include limited roadways and poor trafficability caused by flooding, erosion and jungle overgrowth. The few roadways available must be kept open for resupply movements; and this requires numerous tactical control points, especially defile operations.

Since resupply is critical, these operations are an inviting target for enemy attack. Convoy and security is important. Coordination between the MP convoy escort element and MP route security element must be preplanned and continuous.



Sketch of Beach Traffic Circulation Plan

Cold Weather And Mountain Operations

In this environment, weather is the prime consideration. Maintenance of equipment is critical. An active buddy system should be employed by Military Police during traffic control activities for mutual support. Once a movement is started, every effort must be maintained to sustain it.

MPs should insure any traffic control signs used do not blend with the ground cover. Roads should have well marked turnout areas for use by vehicles. The passing rule for mountain roads must be enforced. **The vehicle being passed must stop on the most dangerous side, while the passing vehicle passes on the safe side.**

Military Police are used as circulation control points at especially dangerous locations on mountain roads requiring defile operations. Additionally, MPs should be trained and equipped to assist in rescue operations.

Blackout Operations

Military Police are required to enforce strict control measures during blackout operations. Blackout conditions discussed here are defined as **movement by night with lights that cannot be spotted by enemy observation, but which prevent collisions by showing the position of the vehicle to other road users.**

The following rules are frequently used by vehicles operating under blackout conditions:

- Vehicle lights indicate vehicle width from the front and rear.
- Vehicles with two wheels have a single white light in front and one red light in the rear.
- Vehicles with three or more wheels display two white or yellow lights in front and two red lights in the rear.
- Devices that diffuse light are used on lighting instruments.
- Lights are also masked to prohibit viewing from the air.
- Lights should be visible at a minimum of 50 meters and a maximum of 300 meters.
- Convoys use two white or yellow lights at the front of each element and two red lights at the rear of each element.

Certain road signs may be required to be illuminated. If so, the following lighting rules apply:

- Signs must have an upper mask to prevent detection of light from above. An observer flying at 150 meters or more must not be able to see the light.
- Light is oriented so the sign is visible at a minimum distance of 100 meters and readable at 30 meters.
- Signs are placed to ensure the downward angled beam of the driving lamp strikes the reflectorized sign.